

employment because of prior criminal convictions, no matter how minor or how long ago they occurred. Let's do the math.

The first line of the executive summary of "[A Fresh Start](#)," Wisconsin Policy Forum's recent report in support of changes to Wisconsin's expungement laws, states: "In Wisconsin, an estimated 1.4 million individuals have criminal records, which may pose a major impediment to securing a job."

The state of Wisconsin's [has a workforce](#) of around 3.1 million people, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics; its unemployment rate is 3 percent, or about 94,000 workers. That means 1.3 million of the 1.4 million state residents with criminal records have managed to find jobs.

Maybe that's because employers need workers. Maybe it because they are reasonable people. Maybe the vast majority of Wisconsin residents are reasonable, and will not immediately discriminate against anyone who has at some point been convicted of a crime. Maybe the whole premise of this rush to seal and remove records is faulty.

I would prefer if we could expand the availability of expungement and clarify that expunged cases cannot be considered in employment decisions without removing all record of these cases from WCCA. I would prefer that the records of these cases not be sealed. But if you cannot find a way to do that without bollixing up this whole bill, I would say as a citizen and not as an advocate for open government that you should pass this bill anyway

Just be aware that this is going to create fresh demands from other groups for similar removal. Why should traffic offenses continue to appear? Why should records of divorces — whose business is that?

And what will happen as a result of these purges is that WCCA will no longer be a comprehensive source of information about what happens in our court system. Rather, it will become more and more a compendium of guilty people — those who are unable to get their names and case information removed.

I believe the people of Wisconsin can be trusted to know the truth about what happens in our courts. They can even be allowed to know that some convictions are expunged, because a court decided that was in the public interest. Maybe — probably — some people *will* abuse this information. But I believe they will be the few and not the many.

Sincerely,



Bill Lueders President
Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council